

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, June 24, 2015, to discuss Economic Development Next Steps.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:02 p.m. The meeting was held in Room 201 of the Greenbelt Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan. Councilmember Silke I. Pope was attending the National League of Cities meeting and was unable to attend.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; Terri Hruby, Assistant Director of Planning; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Stuart Eisenberg and Molly O'Connell, Hyattsville Community Development Corporation; Advisory Planning Board Members Brian Gibbons, Keith Chernikoff, Nicole Williams, Maria Silvia Miller and Jeff Lemieux; Barbara Simon, Greenbelt Community Development Corporation; Kap Kapastin, Quantum Management/Beltway Plaza; Jim Giese, Greenbelt News Review; Molly Lester and others.

Mr. McLaughlin provided a history of the Economic Development Study produced by Sage Policy Group. He reviewed the recommendations of the report:

- 1) Support owner-occupied housing development in Greenbelt East and Greenbelt West*
- 2) Provide tax breaks for GHI properties for approved improvements*
- 3) Provide Tax Breaks to Catalyze Rejuvenation of Older Commercial Areas*
- 4) Reconsider development plans at Beltway plaza*
- 5) Strive for Change at Roosevelt Center*

Mr. McLaughlin said funding had been included in the FY 2016 budget for economic development and funding for incentives for homeowners. He said Council had requested staff reach out to the Hyattsville Community Development Corporation (HCDC) to determine if they could help implement the steps recommended by the Sage Policy Group and move the City forward with economic development. Mr. McLaughlin said the purpose of the work session this evening was to meet with HCDC and identify where the City wants to go and to develop a work plan for the future.

Mr. Eisenberg reviewed charts which 1) provided an inventory of options and strategies other Prince George's County municipalities are using to promote tourism, small business and support economic development; and 2) compared economic development staff and budgets for the same municipalities.

Mr. Eisenberg said incentives that can generate substantial revenue over time need to be determined. He reported that it takes years to build tax base without annexation, and years to create a reputation through implementation of different strategies at different costs. Mr. Eisenberg added that administrative staff time required for each incentive offered needs to be considered.

Mayor Jordan expressed Council's concerns about the high office vacancy rate, aging infrastructure and housing stock, and stagnant commercial areas in the City. He stressed the need for Council to develop a shared vision and plot out a path for future economic

development. Mr. Herling suggested the opportunity exists to request State designation as an Arts District. Ms. Mach noted that the Sage Report noted that the City needed to find a way to attract younger creative residents to the community and retain them.

Mr. Roberts said he is most concerned about the City becoming over-developed. He said he is interested in having affordable space for small businesses which are the driving forces of the economy. Ms. Davis agreed that communities were needed for small businesses to get a start and added that government subsidies are available. She said she hoped the City could find a niche and not just offer the same as other cities in the area, such as Arts Districts.

Mayor Jordan said the residential and commercial footprint of the City is well established. He said in order to maintain the excellent level of services, the City has to find a way to grow the tax base. Mayor Jordan said he believes there is a lot of potential with start-up companies and small businesses. He commented on the large number of successful small tech companies and medical facilities in the City.

Mr. Herling mentioned the City's commitment to the environment and the interest in attracting "green" companies. He also noted his desire for an intercity circulator bus in the future that will connect all areas of the City. Mr. Herling said this type of bus would help market Greenbelt and provide residents with a sense of community.

Ms. Davis mentioned that the City is already doing a lot of items listed on the chart of Marketing and Tourism, Business Support and Planning information. She said that in order to do more, additional staff would be needed.

Keith Chernikoff, Advisory Planning Board (APB) member, suggested future economic development focus on the areas of residential, information technology and medical.

Kap Kapastin, Beltway Plaza, said he didn't think Beltway Plaza had ever been accepted as part of the Greenbelt community. He mentioned that Beltway Plaza had tried to put mixed use in Beltway Plaza for many years and the plans were never acceptable to Council. Mr. Kapastin suggested the City needs to be kinder and gentler in terms of its relationship with businesses. He also suggested that the City have someone designated for business development/economic development similar to the City of Bowie. He added that in order for the City to attract younger residents, it needs to move towards the future and not stay focused on past history.

Jeff Lemieux, APB member, said he had attended a meeting of the Coalition for Smarter Growth in Hyattsville. He said the Coalition is focused on creating an atmosphere to attract residents to the City and then having businesses follow.

Brian Gibbons, Advisory Planning Board Chair, stressed the need to have a plan that identifies what is wanted in the future and be able to attract a developer(s) with similar interests.

Sylvia Miller, APB member, stressed it is time for the City to move forward on economic development and stressed the need to have an Economic Development Coordinator with experience and a staff person to assist the Coordinator.

Nicole Williams, APB member, said economic development had been talked about enough and it was time to begin to move forward to lay a foundation for future economic development.

Council discussed the need to analyze what the City has, determine where it wants to be in the future and to start building on a plan. Mayor Jordan noted Council had included funding in the budget to contract with a firm for economic development.

Mr. Eisenberg said the HCDC would like the opportunity to develop a proposal for a work plan for economic development. He said a small area plan approach can generate measurable results if done correctly with interactive input from Council, staff and the community. Mr. Eisenberg said the most important thing about any plan is the implementation, and continuation and constant assessment. He added that sustainability needed to be included within the plan. In response to a question from Mayor Davis, Mr. Eisenberg said he could have a proposal ready by the end of July.

Council thanked Mr. Eisenberg and Ms. O'Connell for attending.

Informational Items

Several informational items were discussed.

The meeting ended at 10:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*